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This is the fifth in a series of articles about the Indians who once populated this state, written especially for The Newark Sunday News Magazine by Charles A. Philhower, authority on Indian lore. In subsequent orticles Mr. Philhower will tell how the Lenni Lenape tribes lived stalked game and cultivated food. He also will reveal their struggles with the white man and explain how their relics interpret Indian culture.

JERSEY INDIANS—

Indian woman cultivating corn with hoe made of stone and wooden handle. Note baby hanging on tree in cradle board. Drawings are from Trenton State Museum.

How the Lenapes Found Their Food

BY CHARLES A. PHILHOWER

WHILE the Lenape Indians who roamed over New Jersey before white men came were great hunters they also were good agriculturists, considering the primitive tools with which they had to work. They grew corn, beans, tobacco, sunflowers, melons, pumpkins and squash and ate many other things which grow. The field and patches were planted and attended by squaws, children and the old men while the young braves did most of the hunting and fishing.

Two types of implements were used in digging up ground for planting, a hand hoe and a hoe fastened on a wooden handle. The blade of stone or a large plate from the back of a sturgeon set at an acute angle to the handle and fastened with bark or sinew made up this latter implement. A hand hoe consisted of a stone blade with the arm of the operator taking the place of the wooden handle.

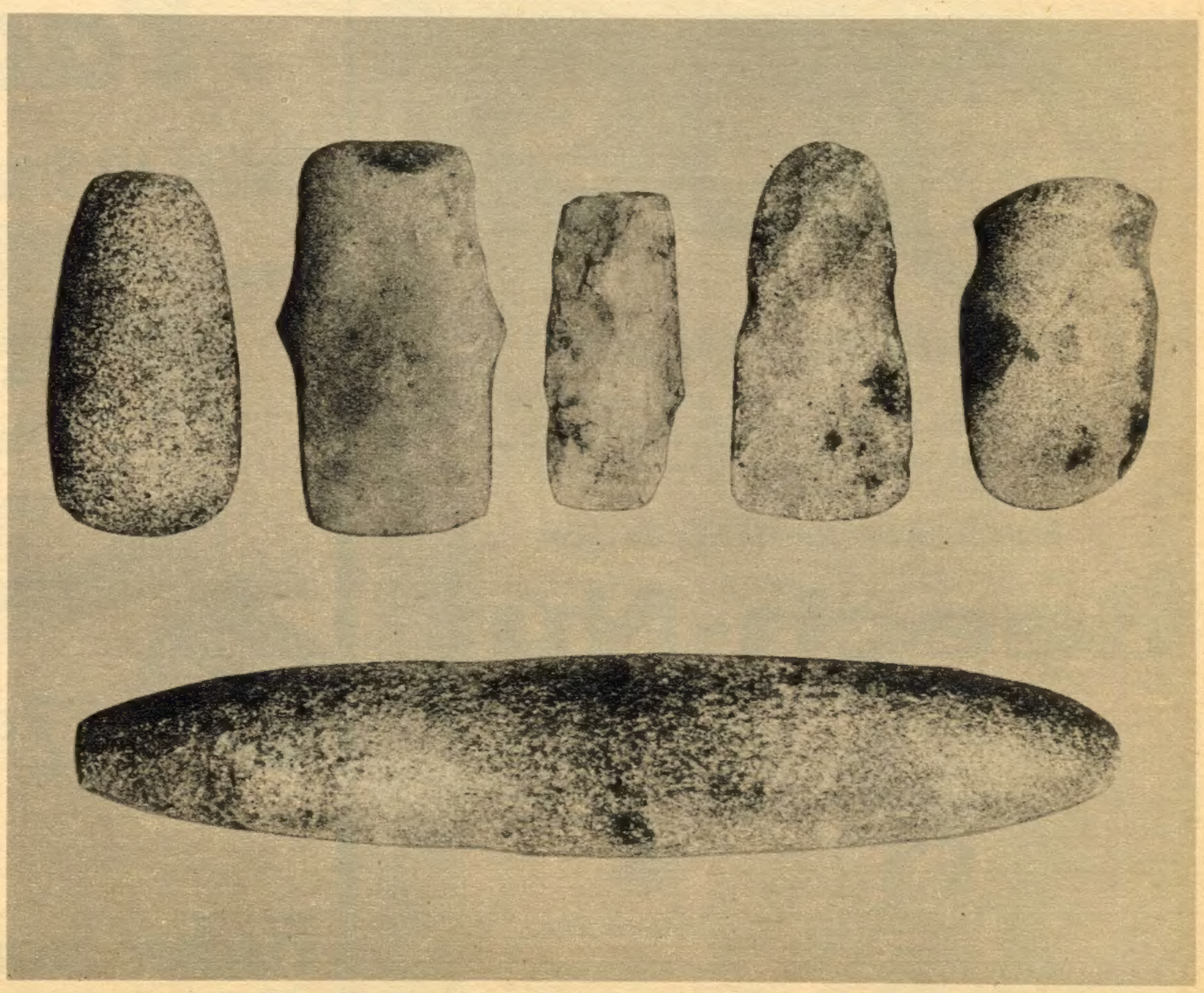
Corn was planted in hills as were soup beans, pumpkins or squash. Dead fish were sometimes used for fertilizer. Usually a shad was placed in each hill since this fish was available at planting time. While the Indians did some cultivating, the crop was generally left to itself. Some attention was necessary from the time the corn was in milk, however, since animals and birds had to be kept away. Ground hogs, raccoons and skunks were much more of a pest then than now. Consequently, the fields were guarded night and day. Great flocks of crows and blackbirds (grackles) frequented the fields daily. A covered dome-shaped structure often stood in the field reaching up above the mature corn. From this vantage point old men would guard the field by shouting or beating a drum.

A SUPPLY of corn for the Winter provided the Jersey Indians with a staple source of food. On approaching a village one would always hear from a distance the thud of the pestle in the mortar. When cornmeal was boiled with water it was called samp, spasis or supawn. The white settlers called it mush. With the Indians, samp took first place in the redskin diet. Often it was eaten as a dry meal. Hominy grits, succotash, ash cakes and pone with supawn sustained the Lenapes alone when meat and fish failed.

Tobacco was grown in patches fertilized and cultivated while sunflowers were grown at large. Most varities of beans were planted by themselves apart from other crops. Melons demanded separate care and considerable attention.

Explorers searching for minerals would take gifts of seeds with them. Among these were included seeds of the apple, peach and pear so that Indian villages soon had these trees growing around them. The apple was especially prized since the Indians were very fond of its juice. One story is told that a Swedish missionary in preaching to the natives recounted how Adam was tempted by Eve's giving him an apple, "the forbidden fruit." He continued with a sermon on sin and man's responsibility. When the preacher had finished an old Indian arose and spoke out, "What you have told us is all very good. It is bad to eat apples. We make them into cider."

THE persimmon was native to the region and Indian boys



Various axe heads fashioned by Jersey redskins out of stone are shown in the top row while the long object is pestle for grinding corn. Found in Monmouth.

These Lenape braves have dammed a river with rocks to catch fish, a common practice here before white man came. Indians drove fish into trap with nets.

had great sport killing opossums which they found feeding in those trees. The fruit was palatable and very nourishing after the first frost struck it and trees grew up from the seeds dropped about the wigwams. Indian village sites along the Cohansie below Bridgeton are known by the persimmon trees growing on them. A tree in Sussex County east of Minisink Island which still bears fruit marks the place where an Indian once lived.

Beech plums were gathered in the coastal area and two or three trails that went across the middle part of the state are referred to as beech plum trails. The Indians were very fond of the black mulberry and would travel long distances when it was in season to feast on it. An old tree is still standing at Indian Mills near which the Indians would gather in the late Summer to enjoy its fruit.

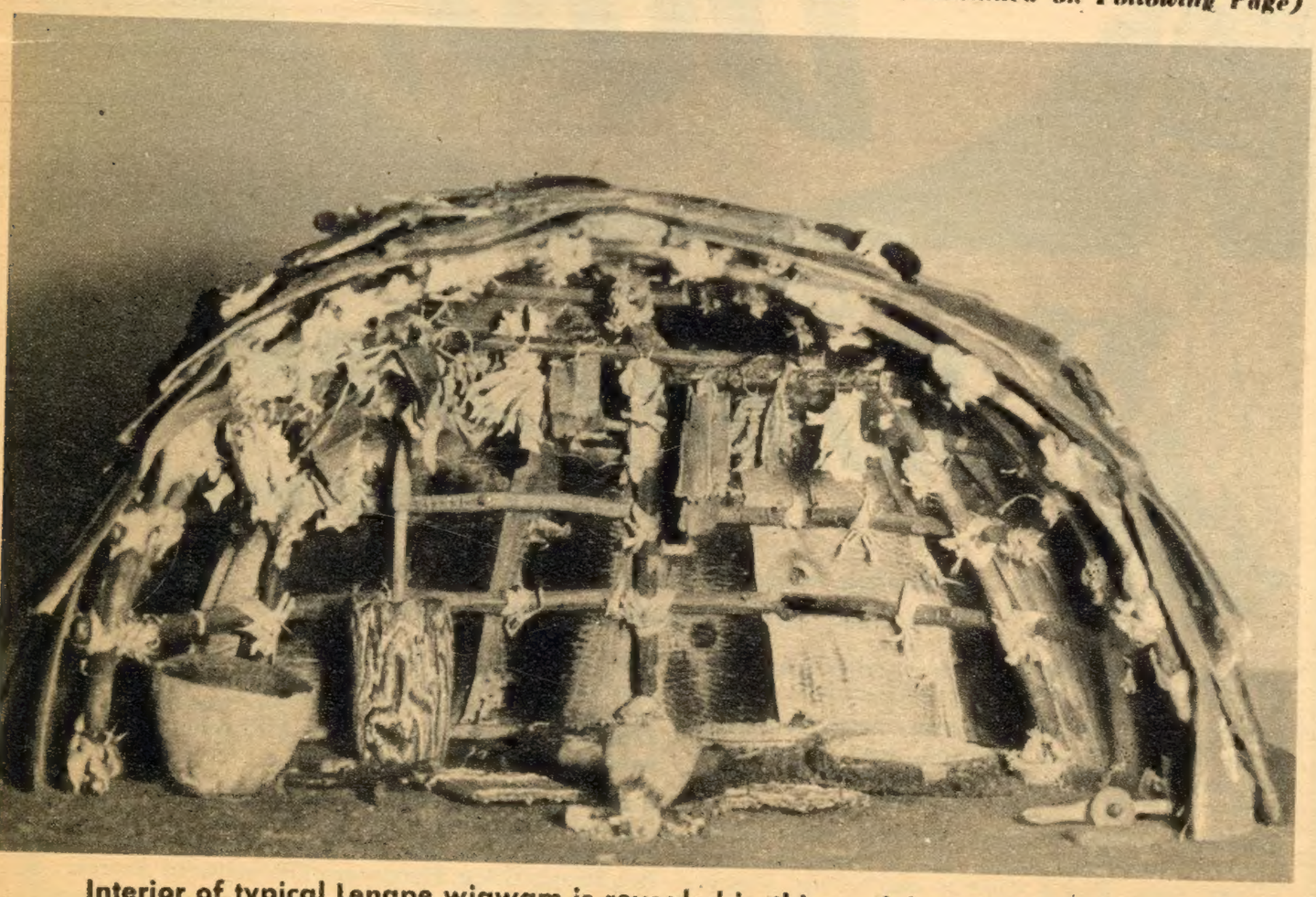
Blackberries, raspberries and huckleberries were gathered when ripe. Some were dried and eaten during the Winter. The Indian word pakihm was the name of the cranberry. The fact that the Lenapes had a word for the berry indicates its importance. Dried grapes were a part of the food supply but there is no suggestion that the redskins ever made wine from them.

IN digging in feast pits on Indian sites it is common occurence to find charred nuts in the fireplaces. Chestnuts, black and white walnuts, hickory nuts and hazelnuts were a considerable supply of food in season. Caches of nuts gathered by squirrels were located and confiscated by the squaws of the village. Nuts were of much value for their oil. They were cracked, the pits were crushed, boiled in water, and the oil was skimmed from the surface. Three oaks here had edible acorns, the basked oak, the willow oak and a species of white oak.

Certain miscellaneous wild plants meant much to the Indian as foods. The root of the morning glory was a sort of sweet potato ration. Old roots have been found in the deep soil on village sites about the size of one's forearm and as brash as a yam. Squaws industriously dug the roots of the ground nut before the earth froze in the Fall. During their first Winter it is said the Pilgrims subsisted on ground nuts. The bulb of jack - in - the - pulpit with its spathe of red berries when boiled with venison also made a delectable dish.

Part of the education of an Indian boy was to find food when snow and ice covered the earth, lakes and rivers. He was taught that there

(Continued on Following Page)



Interior of typical Lenape wigwam is revealed in this model at Newark Museum which shows corn and other food Indians grew hanging to dry on roof rafters.

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JERSEY INDIANS

(Cont'd from Preceding Page)

were spring holes that never froze over and that in the bottom of these pools there were the foliage buds of the sweetflag waiting for the warmth of Springtime to tempt them to the surface. To these he would repair when food ran short or storm delayed him. This storehouse of roots and bulbs of the sweet flag and the spatter dock often saved the lives of famished travelers and hunters.

MENTION must be made of the fruit of the opuntia, the single wild cactus of the East. This is found on the sand hills of South Jersey and on the rock cliffs of the northern hills. The succulent joints of the stem were roasted and the purple fruit was eaten raw. But you might ask how could they eat it when it is covered with minute spines? The answer is that to get rid of the spines the Indians rubbed them over carefully with the large, woolly leaves of the mullein plant. This effort was a profitable one for the stem and fruit are very tasty and highly nutritive.

Another great source of food in certain areas was the nelumbo or water chinquepin. It is found in New Jersey in Swartswood Lake, Sussex County, and in Old Man's Creek at Grave Yard Reach near Auburn in Salem County. The fruit when ripe is filled with nutlike seeds resembling the chinquepin of the South. These are edible and were diligently gathered and stored by the Indians. The large creeping roots of this plant are bitter when eaten raw but when washed and boiled they become an agreeable food. The roots were dried for Winter use.

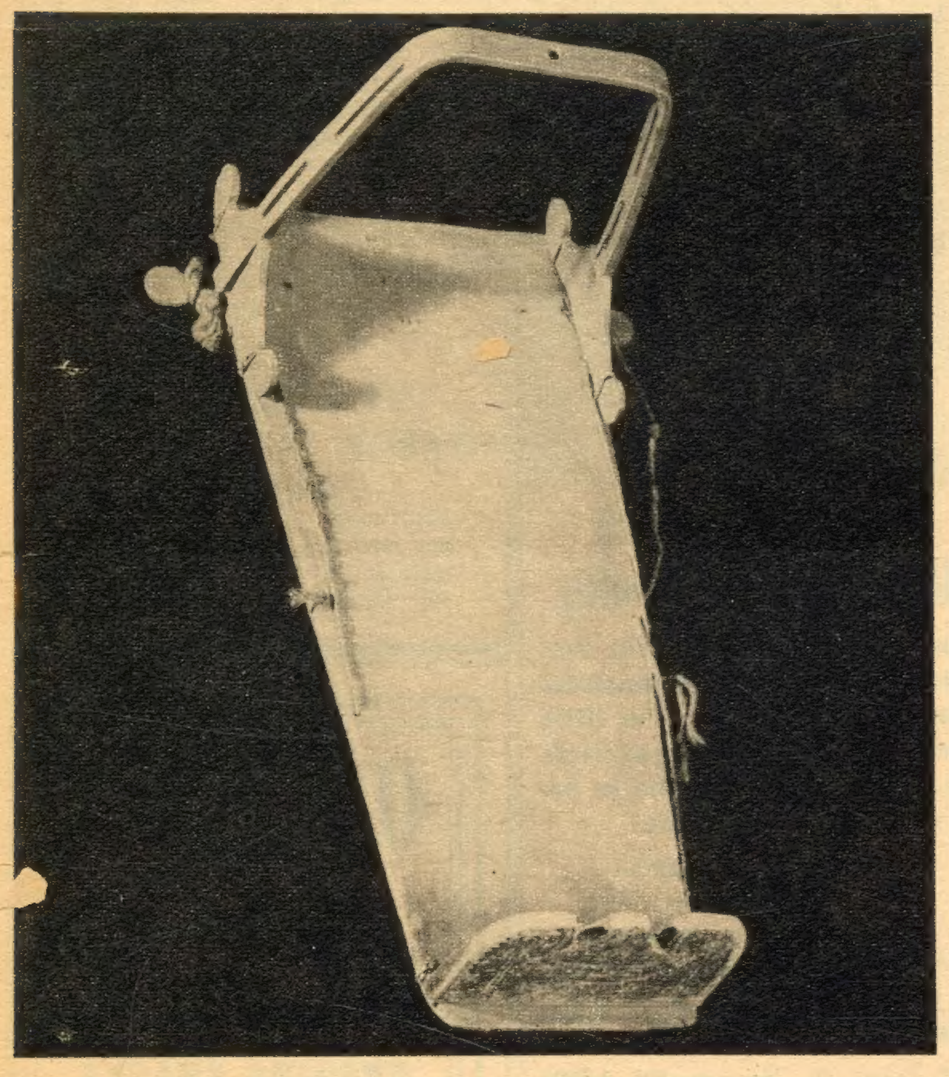
WILD artichokes, garlic, wild leek and onions, chives, asparagus roots, water cress, sassafras, wild ginger, many fungi, may apple, papaw and other things almost without number contributed to the diet of the Indians here.

Honey from bee trees, sap from the maple and birch, flour from the dried inner bark of hemlock, oak, maple and slippery elm, the bark of the birch and especially the bark from kinnikinick which was mixed with tobacco added to the redskin's comfort.

In the Fall, if one approached an Indian village it was difficult to get near the place for the domesticated wolf, the Indian's dog, would attack in great packs, sometimes as many as 100 at a time. In the Spring of the year this would not be true for in spite of charred corn, dried fish, mussels, clams and the quarry of the chase, the Indian was ultimately driven to "eat dog," an expression still heard today.

NEXT WEEK: Wigwam life and how the Jersey Indians adorned themselves.

Fruit and vegetables in this picture were common to Indians who once populated Jersey. Stone object near corn is grinding dish. Axe is stuck in squash.



This is what the well-dressed Indian papoose wore while his mother cultivated the family garden. Squaw could fasten board on back or hang it on a tree as shown on Page 16. Board is in American Natural History Museum collection, New York.

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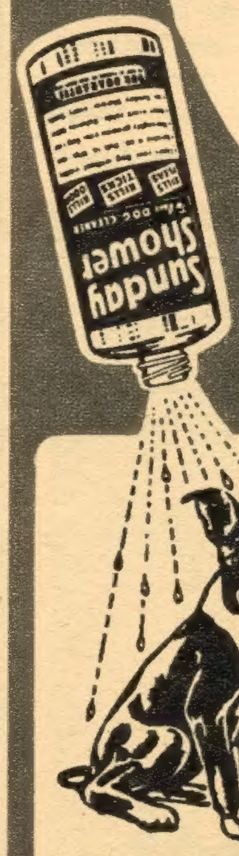

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